Candidate’s Guide to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
What is RPL?
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an assessment process that recognises the skills, knowledge and experience you have gained through previous studies, work, volunteer positions and life in general. Put simply, it means if you can demonstrate you already have the skills and experience you can complete a whole or partial qualification without needing to attend classes or participate in learning.

How does RPL differ from Credit?
Credit for previous studies is not a recognition of prior learning (RPL) process. RPL is a form of assessment of the competence of a person, while providing credit is recognising the equivalence of units of study previously undertaken and completed successfully.

How can RPL benefit me?
Recognition may help you to:
- reduce the time required to complete your course or qualification
- lower the cost of your government subsidised qualification
- meet the entry requirements for higher level qualifications

This guide will help you answer questions such as:
- how does RPL work?
- how do I get involved?
- who else is involved?
- how do I prove my skills and knowledge?
- what evidence is required?
- what happens if I don’t have the appropriate skills or knowledge?
What is the recognition process?

1. Pre-assessment application via *Get Recognised!* or teacher
2. Candidate completes self-assessment using provided toolkit
3. Assessor reviews self-assessment to determine suitability for RPL
4. Candidate enrolls and pays relevant fee
5. Professional conversation with assessor and additional evidence provided
6. Recognition of current competence (RCC) *(practical assessment, if required)*
7. RPL decision advised and fee recalculation *(if required)*

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**Individual learning plan & gap training *(if required)*

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Qualification issued by TAFE Illawarra
Example RPL candidate - could this be you?

Over the years Jim has held a number of positions in different industry areas. The tasks Jim undertook in all positions required him to: liaise with customers; take orders from customers; record and maintain order information systems; order stock; maintain stock supplies; pack orders ready for delivery; supervise delivery staff.

Jim also has been a member of a local volunteer organisation where he has held positions such as secretary and committee member. A keen sportsman he is active in the local soccer club organising junior players. Jim has been unemployed at times during his career but while unemployed remained active in the community as a volunteer. Jim has also attended a number of short training courses.

Jim is interested in a career as a supervisor as he feels his experience demonstrates the ability to supervise and manage different situations. He is finding it very difficult as he has never gained any qualifications to show the range of skills and knowledge he has as a supervisor. He considers himself to be very experienced but is uncertain what his next step should be in trying to have this recognised. He has spoken to a number of friends who also do not know where he might go to find out some information.

This story is not uncommon; your story might be similar, although your background and experience may be very different from Jim’s.
Self-Assessment

If you are serious about getting formal recognition of your skills and knowledge, you should consider the following:

- **IS** the information provided relevant to me?
- **WHAT** tasks have I undertaken at work?
- **HOW** recently have I undertaken these tasks?
- **WHAT** formal or information training have I completed in previous job roles?
- **WHAT** tasks have I performed in voluntary or non-workplace positions?
- **CAN** I provide evidence or prove I have the required skills?
- **AM I** up-to-date on legislation and regulations relevant to the qualification industry?
Who is involved in RPL?

- Previous or current employers
- TAFE Illawarra Assessor
- TAFE Illawarra Customer Service and Teachers
- Others who can provide evidence for you

YOU (the Candidate)
Understanding RPL jargon
You will hear a number of terms being used regarding RPL and recognition. Here are some of the most commonly used terms:

Registered Training Organisation (RTO)
An RTO is an organisation registered to issue nationally recognised qualifications or statements of attainment in Australia. An RTO, such as TAFE Illawarra offers you recognition and assists you through the process.

Nationally recognised qualification
A formal certification that is recognised nationally and awarded under the Australian qualification framework for the achievement of competencies.

Competency
Competency is a mix of knowledge, technical skills, understanding, problem solving and attitudes that can be demonstrated in the workplace. To be deemed competent you are assessed against the relevant unit of competency.

Unit of competency
This is the description of the job or work function that you need to perform such as Operate a Bar, Drive a Forklift, Communicate in the Workplace, and the standard of performance and knowledge required.

Assessment
Assessment is a process in which the candidate and the assessor work together to gather evidence to enable the assessor to make a decision on the candidates competence.
What information should you expect?

You should be supplied with enough information to make an informed decision on whether to pursue RPL. Below is a list of typical information you should expect to receive:

A RPL self-assessment toolkit which contains:

- the definition of RPL
- steps in the RPL process
- information relevant to your qualification
- information to help you assess your skills against the competencies you are interested in
- suggested evidence requirements (what you can provide or demonstrate to prove your skills and knowledge)
- guidelines on how to present your evidence.

You will also be provided with information on:

- support available to you
- the costs involved and what the cost covers
- typical timelines of the process
- roles and responsibilities of TAFE Illawarra, assessors and you
- individual interviews or course advisory sessions
- how you will be given feedback on information you have submitted
- what happens if you are unsuccessful.
How do I prove what I know I can do?

There are many types of evidence you can gather to prove you have the necessary knowledge and skills and experience for assessment against the competency.

You will be working with a TAFE Illawarra assessor to identify:

- **Evidence** you may already have such as work documents and testimonials from previous employers, samples of your work.

- **Evidence** that needs to be collected by the assessor, for example the assessor may observe you completing a task or ask questions to confirm your knowledge.

TAFE Illawarra will help you understand what evidence is and what specific types of evidence might be suitable to gain the qualification you are pursuing. Evidence can take a number of forms and might include any combination of:

- **Questioning** – the assessor may give you written questions or, interview you and asks questions verbally.

- **Observation of practical tasks** – the assessor may observe you performing tasks in the workplace, in a simulated environment, in the classroom or combination of locations.

- **Finished products** – items you have produced in your work which could vary from food you have cooked to reports you have written.

- **Presentations** – the assessor observing presentations made by you.

- **Video/audio taped evidence** – showing you completing tasks.

- **Third party reports** – references or answers given by third parties to questions from the assessor, providing examples of your work ability relating to the standards - this can be verbal or in writing.

- **Documents** – such as relevant qualifications/transcripts, project plans and reports, minutes of meetings, correspondence, resources developed.

- Anything else that you or the assessor deem is relevant that proves your competence.

You should decide with your assessor the specific types of evidence to be collected, the timelines for submission of evidence and what form the submission should take.
Are there different RPL candidates?

Here are two examples of different ways evidence can be presented.

Example 1 - Chloe is a supervisor in a large retail outlet in the city. The outlet has a number of locations and it is Chloe’s responsibility to supervise staff across the locations.

Chloe has had to deal with a number of team and staff issues across the locations which she has effectively done so on many occasions.

Her tasks include: organising her own work, supervising the work of others but under her manager’s supervision, adhering to organisational WHS policies and procedures, developing teams and team members, developing and implementing communication amongst team members.

Chloe would like to gain some recognition for the skills and knowledge her position requires.

Chloe’s assessment will use workplace evidence but no observation as it is difficult to ‘see’ the requirements of the units by observation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible units of competency</th>
<th>Possible evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSBWOR404 – Develop work priorities</td>
<td>Chloe completed projects in the workplace which were identified by Chloe and her assessor as relevant evidence examples.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSBWHS401 – Implement and monitor WHS policies, procedures and programs to meet legislative requirements</td>
<td>Chloe produced work records including her work plans, minutes of meetings and risk assessments she had conducted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSBLDR403 – Lead team effectiveness</td>
<td>The assessor asked Chloe questions about her knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSBWOR402 - Promote team effectiveness</td>
<td>Chloe obtained a report from her supervisor outlining her tasks and how she performs them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSBLDR402 - Lead effective workplace relationships</td>
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Example 2

Ray has worked for a local building company for a number of years. His main tasks are:

- adhering to Workplace, Health and Safety requirements (his safety and the safety of others)
- following plans developed by his supervisor
- preparing and handling materials
- using tools and equipment
- carrying out basic demolition.

The table below shows the units of competency that may be suitable and the types of evidence that could be gathered.

As the tasks are very hands on, assessment would take place at the work site.

<table>
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<th>Possible units of competency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPCCOHS2001A – Apply WHS requirements, policies and procedures in the construction industry</td>
<td>The assessor observed Ray at work following WHS requirements including correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The assessor validated Ray’s knowledge of WHS by asking him questions about safe work practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPCCBC4012B – Read &amp; interpret plans and specifications</td>
<td>The assessor observed Ray at work. The assessor validated Ray’s knowledge and asked Ray questions about his knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPCCCM004A – Handle construction materials</td>
<td>Ray obtained a report from his supervisor outlining the tasks he performs at work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPCCCA2002B - Use carpentry tools and equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPCCCM2009A – Carry out basic demolition</td>
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What happens after evidence is gathered?

Once you have submitted your evidence the assessor reviews it against the competency standard. The evidence is reviewed together as a whole and recorded by the assessor using documents and tools developed by TAFE Illawarra.

The assessor needs to ensure that your evidence:

**Is valid** - does your evidence:
- relate directly to the unit of competency?
- demonstrate relevant skills & knowledge? and
- is it appropriate to the relevant level required by the competency?

**Is sufficient** - does your evidence:
- include all the critical tasks and knowledge in the unit of competency?
- prove you have performed these over a period of time and in different situations?
- have you submitted enough different forms of evidence?

**Is authentic** - can each piece of evidence:
- be clearly identified as your own work and is it dated and referenced?
- where your evidence is part of teamwork, is your specific role clearly defined?
- are qualifications, references, licences etc presented by you certified documents?
- are your verbal or written accounts about what you can do verified by a credible third party and/or supported by documented evidence?

**Is current** - does your evidence:
- demonstrate you have the skills and knowledge required to meet current performance requirements?
Do I need to attend an interview?

Yes - an interview, whether face-to-face, by telephone or other means is a common part of any RPL process. This is often referred to as a Professional Conversation.

This will allow your assessor to:

- ask questions to explore the extent of your knowledge
- seek clarification about items of evidence
- ensure the whole competency is demonstrated
- document the conversation to be used as part of the evidence.

Making a decision

The assessor will make a decision about your competence and will discuss this with you – in a face-to-face interview or by telephone. Receiving constructive feedback from your assessor is very important at this point.

The assessor will make one of the following decisions:

- you are competent (C) in a unit (or units) of competency
- you are not yet competent (NYC)
- further evidence is required.
What does the decision mean?

**Competent** - you will be issued with the qualification or statement of attainment listing the units you have been assessed competent in.

**Not yet competent** - options are explored which could include:

- you being issued with a statement of attainment in units achieved if the whole qualification is not achieved
- you undertaking further training by enrolment in a class to meet skills gaps
- you undertaking further training by enrolment in online or distance education
- you being asked to complete work-based projects or assessments to further develop skills and/or knowledge.

**Further evidence required** – really means that for some reason the assessor could not make a decision based on the evidence submitted so far. This could have been for a number of reasons including:

- evidence did not relate clearly to the units
- insufficient evidence
- evidence was not current
- there were inconsistencies in the evidence submitted.

This is where the assessor will discuss with you options for gathering more evidence or gaining the qualification/units of competency in another way.

You should be provided with enough feedback to ensure you understand what the next step may be and why you were assessed as either not yet competent (NYC) or are required to present more evidence.

This should be an open, transparent process which includes two-way communication so that you can ask questions.
What happens next?

Your assessor will be required to complete records of your assessment. These records must follow TAFE Illawarra’s record keeping procedure. There are clear principles that underpin this to ensure:

- your privacy is maintained
- confidentiality is ensured
- RTO legislative requirements are met
- any licensing requirements are met
- any contract requirements are met.

Your personal records must be kept securely for the required period of time. You have access to these records and if for some reason you lose your qualification or statement of attainment you can approach the TAFE Illawarra for a copy, though this may involve a cost.
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

If you have any other questions please do not hesitate to ask by contacting the recognition team on 1300 766 123 or email illawarra.recognition@tafensw.edu.au.

Does RPL reduce the cost of my course?

RPL may reduce both the time and the cost of a government funded qualification. Recognition reduces fees for learners who do not pay a concession fee. If the unit is being sought by RPL the cost of the unit is reduced by 50%.

If you have previously completed a unit you can receive credit for this unit. This means you do not need to complete the unit or pay for the unit.

What happens when I decide to apply for RPL?

The recognition team will respond to your query and if deemed suitable for RPL, you will be provided with a RPL self-assessment toolkit for the qualification you are applying for.

Once we have received your completed RPL self-assessment toolkit and any supporting materials an assessor will contact you to discuss your responses and to determine if there are any gaps in your knowledge or skills that may have to be filled prior to you achieving the qualification.

How long do I have to have been working before I can apply for RPL?

There is no set length of time to have been working prior to applying for RPL however experienced workers have generally applied their knowledge and skills; communicated effectively; understood and applied relevant legislation; and solved workplace problems in a range of situations to become competent.

Read through the activities detailed in the self-assessment toolkit before making a decision about whether you should submit an application. If you think you have most of the skills then the assessor will assist you to demonstrate competence.

Will any of the previous qualifications that I’ve gained count in the RPL process?

When you submit your application for RPL include certified copies of any qualifications that you have already obtained. The assessor will consider a Credit Transfer if any of the units of competency in the course you have previously completed are equivalent to the unit/s of competency in the course you are enrolled.
I have been working for the same organisation for a number of years, is this sufficient evidence to gain RPL?

Not necessarily. The length of time in a workplace is not by itself sufficient evidence. You must be able to demonstrate that you have the knowledge and can perform the skills required to the standard expected in the workplace that is detailed in the units of competency in the qualification. Some people may work for many years in one place but still need to develop broader skills and knowledge.

How is it possible to get a qualification if I have not attended any formal training? Will it be as good as one gained through study at a TAFE or anywhere else in Australia?

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) recognises skills and knowledge irrespective of where you learnt those skills. You do not have to attend formal training in order to have these skills recognised. The qualification will be the same as any gained through study at a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) anywhere in Australia.

What are the benefits to my organisation if they are to support me through the RPL process?

Many organisations have come to realise that providing an employee with a ‘piece of paper’ is only one benefit to both the candidate and the business. They have traditionally stated “our biggest asset is our people” but are also very conscious of the fact that words alone don’t get the job done. A RPL assessment will assist in identifying gaps in employee knowledge and skills whether they are in planning, budgeting, administration, service or production, and once filled will assist the business to be more productive, responsive and profitable.

I was never too good at doing tests at school. Will I have to sit for practical and theory tests during my RPL?

The RPL assessment process involves an assessor developing a relationship with you as a professional colleague and encouraging you to discuss and demonstrate tasks that you do every day at work in your specialist area. It’s not an assessment that requires you to ‘state definitions’ or ‘list items’ but is more about your practical application associated with real work examples.
Want to know more?


You can also call our friendly Customer Service team on

**1300 766 123**

or

Email [illawarra.recognition@tafensw.edu.au](mailto:illawarra.recognition@tafensw.edu.au)